



WARNING: Smokeless Tobacco
is Not Harmless Tobacco

TIPS
ON
SAFETY



Something Healthy to Chew On: Tips on Spit



Tips on Spit is a program sponsored by the Massachusetts Dental Society (MDS) developed to spread the word that *smokeless tobacco is not harmless tobacco.*

What is spit tobacco?

There are two forms of spit tobacco: chewing tobacco and snuff.

Chewing Tobacco, packaged in a pouch, is usually placed between the cheek and gum, with users keeping it in their mouths for several hours to get a continuous high from the nicotine and tobacco.

Snuff Tobacco, usually sold in cans, is placed between the lower lip and the gums. Just a pinch is needed to release the nicotine, which is then swiftly absorbed into the bloodstream, resulting in a quick high.

No problem, right? Keep reading.

The term “smokeless tobacco” was coined by a tobacco company to make it sound harmless to users. However, according to the MDS, there is no such thing as harmless tobacco.

A Report in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* calculated that smokeless tobacco users who use chew or dip 8 to 10 times a day could be exposed to the same amount of nicotine as people who smoke 30 to 40 cigarettes a day.

How is this possible? Because spit tobacco has a higher dose of nicotine than cigarettes. An average dose of nicotine in chewing tobacco is 4.6 mg compared with 1.8 mg in a cigarette. And it's the nicotine that makes you addicted.

But it's important to know that it's not the nicotine that causes cancer; it's other chemicals in tobacco products.

Do you know what's in spit tobacco? Just name your poison:

- Polonium 210 (nuclear waste)
- N-Nitrosamines (cancer-causing compounds)
- Formaldehyde (embalming fluid)
- Nicotine (addictive drug)
- Cadmium (used in batteries)
- Cyanide
- Arsenic
- Benzene
- and Lead (nerve poison)



Nothing to spit at, is it? So it's not surprising that the most serious effect of using spit tobacco is an increased risk of cancer of the mouth and pharynx. Smokeless tobacco is absorbed quickly and directly through the inside of the mouth, making it very dangerous...and potentially deadly. Research has shown more than half of spit tobacco users have non-cancerous or pre-cancerous lesions in their mouth, with their chance of getting oral cancer being 400 percent greater than for nonusers. Oral cancer kills 50 percent of its victims within five years of diagnosis.



Like many teenagers, Gruen Von Behrens first tried spit tobacco at age 13. By age 17, he had been diagnosed with oral cancer. Since then, he's had nearly 30 disfiguring surgeries to save his life, including one surgery that removed half of his neck muscles, lymph nodes, and half of his tongue.

"If I had known then what I know now, I never would have put dip in my mouth. Spit tobacco seemed harmless, but it has ruined my life," says Gruen.

Other Tips on Spit:

Spit tobacco's direct and repeated contact with the gums causes them to recede, which can eventually result in tooth loss.

If you use spit tobacco, your risk of developing heart disease increases. The constant flow of nicotine into your body causes greater risk heart disease, increased blood pressure, and sometimes irregular heart beats leading to a greater risk of heart attacks and strokes.

If you use dip, check for early warning signs:

- A sore in your mouth that bleeds easily and doesn't heal
- A lump or thickening anywhere in your mouth or neck
- Soreness or swelling that doesn't go away
- A red or white patch that doesn't go away
- Trouble chewing, swallowing, or moving your tongue or jaw

Pain is rarely an early symptom of oral cancer. For this reason, all tobacco users need regular dental checkups. Even if you don't find a problem, see your dentist for a mouth check every three months. Chances for a cure are best if oral cancer is detected early.

Want to Quit Spit?

You've read the bad news, but there is good news that you can sink your teeth into. Even though it's difficult to quit using spit tobacco, it can be done. The following tips are ideas to help you or a friend quit.

1. Think of reasons why you want to quit:
 - You don't want to risk your health.
 - It's offensive to people around you.
 - You don't like being addicted to nicotine.
 - You don't like having bad breath and you don't want to have stained teeth.
2. Pick a quit date and throw all your chewing tobacco away.
3. Ask your friends, family, and coaches to help you quit. Remember, most people don't start chewing on their own, so don't try quitting on your own either.
4. Find activities, such as exercise or developing a hobby, to keep your mind off spit tobacco.
5. Talk to your dentist about trying a nicotine gum or another nicotine replacement product. Even sugarless gum or sucking on hard, sugarless candy may help.
6. Reward yourself. Save the money that you would have spent on buying spit tobacco products and instead buy something else.





It's important to remember that quitting is not easy because nicotine addiction is a powerful addiction.

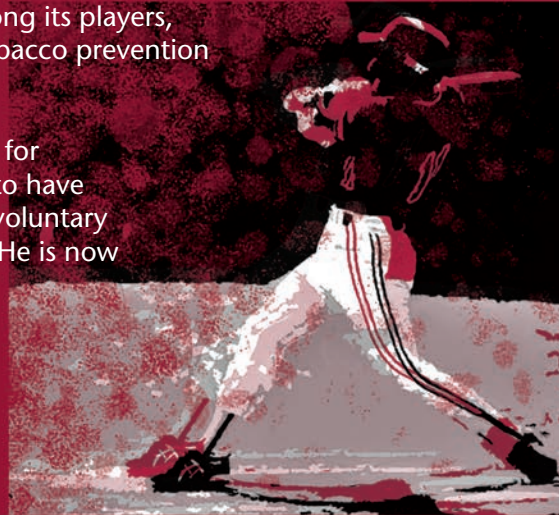
When you quit, your body will crave nicotine and you may feel withdrawal symptoms. If you experience headaches, dizziness, dry mouth, or a sore throat, contact your dentist or physician for information on handling nicotine withdrawal.

If at first you don't succeed—try, try, again!

On a positive note, the popularity of smokeless tobacco use among youth and adult users is declining, including use among athletes.

While baseball has traditionally been an indirect promoter of using smokeless tobacco, due to widespread use among its players, individual players now encourage smokeless tobacco prevention and cessation.

In March 1998, Curt Schilling, a former pitcher for the Boston Red Sox, was one of 83 ballplayers to have tobacco-related mouth lesions found during a voluntary checkup of 141 players during spring training. He is now an advocate against smokeless tobacco.



**Whether you call it chewing tobacco, dip or spit-
tobacco is still tobacco. *And all forms of tobacco are harmful.***

TIPS ON SPIT



For information on **Tips on Spit**, contact:
Massachusetts Dental Society
Two Willow Street, Suite 200 • Southborough, MA 01745
(800) 342-8747 • www.massdental.org